

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action dated October 20, 2004. Claims 9-11 and 13-14 are pending. Applicants affirm the election of Species I, without traverse.

The title and abstract have been addressed per the Examiner's request. See the formality changes above to the title and abstract.

Claim 9 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Yoritomi in view of Tsujimura (US 6,556,271) and Tagusa. This Section 103(a) rejection is respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

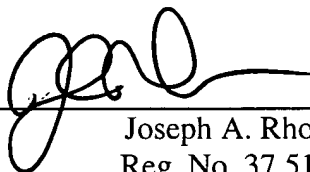
Tsujimura is not prior art. In particular, applicants invented the instant invention well prior to the May 15, 2000 U.S. filing date of Tsujimura. A Rule 131 declaration is attached hereto establishing the earlier invention by applicants. Since Tsujimura is not prior art under Section 102(e), the aforesaid Section 103(a) rejection should be withdrawn, as should the other Section 103(a) rejection relying on Tsujimura.

If any minor matter remains to be resolved, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned with regard to the same.

Respectfully submitted,

NIXON & VANDERHYE P.C.

By: _____



Joseph A. Rhoa
Reg. No. 37,515

JAR:caj
1100 North Glebe Road, 8th Floor
Arlington, VA 22201-4714
Telephone: (703) 816-4000
Facsimile: (703) 816-4100